

Office of the Sheriff
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY



STATIONS

Buellton
140 W. Highway 246
Buellton, CA 93427
Phone (805) 686-8150

Carpinteria
5775 Carpinteria Avenue
Carpinteria, CA 93013
Phone (805) 755-4452

Isla Vista
6504 Trigo Road
Isla Vista, CA 93117
Phone (805) 681-4179

Lompoc
3500 Harris Grade Road
Lompoc, CA 93436
Phone (805) 737-7737

New Cuyama
70 Newsome Street
New Cuyama, CA 93254
Phone (661) 766-2310

Santa Maria
812-A W. Foster Road
Santa Maria, CA 93455
Phone (805) 934-6150

Solvang
1745 Mission Drive
Solvang, CA 93463
Phone (805) 686-5000

Sheriff - Coroner Office
66 S. San Antonio Road
Santa Barbara, CA 93110
Phone (805) 681-4145

Main Jail
4436 Calle Real
Santa Barbara, CA 93110
Phone (805) 681-4260

COURT SERVICES
CIVIL OFFICES

Santa Barbara
1105 Santa Barbara Street
P.O. Box 690
Santa Barbara, CA 93102
Phone (805) 568-2900

Santa Maria
312 E. Cook Street, "O"
P.O. Box 5049
Santa Maria, CA 93456
Phone (805) 346-7430

HEADQUARTERS
P.O. Box 6427 • 4434 Calle Real • Santa Barbara, California 93160
Phone (805) 681-4100 • Fax (805) 681-4322
www.sbsheriff.org

BILL BROWN
Sheriff - Coroner
SOL LINVER
Undersheriff

June 29, 2020

Pamela Olsen
Foreperson
2019-2020 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury
Grand Jury Chambers
Santa Barbara County Courthouse
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

RE: Response to the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report Entitled
"Santa Barbara County Coroner's Bureau Still A Substandard Facility"

Dear Foreperson Olsen:

Enclosed please find the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office response to the 2019-2020 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report entitled *"Santa Barbara County Coroner's Bureau Still A Substandard Facility"*

As requested in the report, the Sheriff's Office is responding to findings and recommendations 3,4,5,6,7 and 8. Should you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me at 681-4290.

Sincerely,

BILL BROWN
Sheriff-Coroner

Enclosure: SBSO response

Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office
Response to the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury 2019-2020 Report
“Santa Barbara County Coroner’s Bureau Still A Substandard Facility”

Finding 3

Discharged air from the autopsy room ventilation system is not monitored, resulting in air-borne pathogens being discharged to the atmosphere.

Response to Finding 3

The Sheriff-Coroner disagrees wholly with this finding.

Recommendation 3

That the Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner monitor discharged air and ensure that no air-borne pathogens are discharged into the atmosphere.

Response to Recommendation 3

The most recent remodel of the Coroner’s Bureau autopsy room occurred in 2016. At that time, County General Services managed the project of installing a negative pressure ventilation system in accordance with OSHA standards. The ventilation system is equipped with a medical-grade HEPA filtration system which filters discharged air from the autopsy suite. The HEPA filter is regularly inspected and changed as needed by General Services.

Finding 4

The bodies are placed in the refrigeration room in body bags and stored on racks.

Response to Finding 4

The Sheriff-Coroner agrees with the finding.

Recommendation 4

That the Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner provide a more modern method of body storage such as refrigerated drawers.

Response to Recommendation 4

This recommendation will not be implemented. The current design of a walk-in cooler with decedent storage racks is efficient and meets the current needs of the Coroner Bureau. The current design is not considered old or outdated. Mortech Manufacturing Co. Inc., a major supplier of mortuary equipment and supplies, currently manufactures and sells the very style of walk-in cooler with rack storage that we utilize at the Coroner’s Bureau. Converting from our current system to a refrigerated drawer system would be cost prohibitive. The current walk-in cooler can store 16 bodies on pre-built racks, and handle an additional 8 on temporary racks if needed. The cost to purchase a 15-body drawer style refrigerator is estimated at \$55,000 which does not include the cost of shipping, dismantling and rebuilding of the new storage system.

In consultation with the sales representative from Mortech Manufacturing, they recommend the walk-in, rack storage style cooler that the Santa Barbara Coroner's Office uses, unless space is an issue. They believe the walk-in style cooler is more efficient and versatile than the drawer style coolers.

Finding 5

An industrial scale is located outside the Sheriff-Coroner's building.

Response to Finding 5

The Sheriff-Coroner agrees with the finding.

Recommendation 5

That the Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner install a body scale within the Sheriff-Coroner's building to determine accurate weight, without consideration of the weight of the body bag or the gurney.

Response to Recommendation 5

This recommendation will not be implemented. The current industrial scale located outside of the Coroner's Facility allows for accurate weight measurements and is efficient. Installing a new industrial scale inside the facility would be costly, and not change the method in which the scale is used.

Finding 6

There is no stainless-steel dissecting table with wash down equipment in the autopsy room.

Response to Finding 6

The Sheriff-Coroner disagrees partially with the finding. The Coroner's Office utilizes a plastic dissecting table rather than stainless steel. There is wash-down equipment in the autopsy room in the form of a sprayer with long hose in which the table can be cleaned and rinsed.

Recommendation 6

That the Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner install a stainless-steel dissecting table with dedicated drainage in the autopsy room.

Response to Recommendation 6

This recommendation will not be implemented as the Sheriff-Coroner utilizes high-tech molded fire-retardant plastic operating platforms. The plastic operating platforms are easy to clean and promote drainage to the table gutters. Additionally, and most importantly, the plastic operating platforms allow personnel to conduct x-rays without having to remove the decedent from the table. The platforms are easy to clean and connect directly to the autopsy suites dedicated drainage system.

Finding 7

The residue from autopsies drains into a sink, which is discharged into the public sewer system.

Response to Finding 7

The Sheriff-Coroner agrees with the finding.

Recommendation 7

That the Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner handle residue from autopsies as biological hazardous waste.

Response to Recommendation 7

All tissue not retained for evidentiary purposes during an autopsy remains with the decedent. Any fluids generated from the performance flow into a dedicated sink, which is inspected and certified by the California Department of Public Health Medical Waste Program and the Goleta Sanitary Waster Resource Recovery District. All bodily fluids discharged into the public sewer system are within compliance of the Goleta Sanitary Water Resource Recovery District, in pursuant to our industrial wastewater discharge permit #II-228. All other material is treated as biological waste, and is collected in a dedicated waste bin, which is removed on a regular basis by a company contracted to handle the waste according to industry guidelines.

Finding 8

All instruments are manually cleaned with soap and water. This is a safety hazard and cross-contamination between autopsies cannot be avoided.

Response to Finding 8

The Sheriff-Coroner disagrees partially with the finding. All instruments are manually cleaned with soap and water. Handling sharp cutting instruments does involve some risk. Risk of cross-contamination between autopsies in not a concern as we are not conducting surgical procedures on living persons and diseases cannot be spread from one decedent to another.

Recommendation 8

That the Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner install an autoclave to ensure all instruments are sterilized after cleaning.

Response to Recommendation 8

This recommendation will not be implemented as the Sheriff-Coroner only conducts approximately 5 autopsies per month. The hand cleaning of instruments is efficient and cost effective, and is in accordance with industry standards.